IV. Telephone, Telegraph and Air Communication

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509 In 1950 telephone communication became possible with Jazirah for the first time on a commercial basis. Telegraph communication has long been established and an air service connectin Qamishli with Aleppo and Damascus started in 1946, then interrupted by the Palestinian War, has been resumed twice weekly. Fares from Qamishli to Aleppo and Damascus are LS 25 and 50, respectively.

V. Railway Line Projects

185 Railway lines wholly inside Syria from Jazirah to the interior cities have been suggested by the Gibb report and by the United Nations Economic Survey Mission. They suggested a line from Tal Koshak to Hassakeh and from there to Rakka and Aleppo. Such a line would by-pass Qamishli which is the more important agricultural and commercial center, and would go in a district only newly developed, sparsely populated and not of the fertility of the Qamishli area. It seems that a line starting from Qamishli itself would be shorter and would service a more fertile and populated district. From Hassakeh the line could follow the Khabur as long as possible before veering to Deir Ezzor. This would be longer than the proposed line from Hassakeh to Rakka directly, but it would have the advantage of servicing the Khabur Valley and collecting its crops, whereas, the line Hassakeh-Rakka is completely desert. From Rakka there is only one route to Aleppo.

It is difficult to choose between a policy of road construction and railway lines without detailed study of the economics of both, but, whatever the result of the study, Jazirah needs cheap and easy means of communication.

COMMERCE OF JAZIRAH

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441 It stands to reason that the commerce of Jazirah is mainly in its staple prodcuts and in the goods required for the development of its essential industry which is agriculture.

The main crop being wheat, it forms the largest item both in bulk and in value. But the Jazirah merchant plays a secondary role in the handling of this crop. He is sometimes a partner, but more

14:International Bank S-5 (1954) 1955 MD1 Syria MD1

the port has been increasing rapidly. To some extent this has been promoted by government regulations which direct certain classes of imports and exports via Latakia. It should be noted, however, that these have not seriously interfered with the traditional traffic between Beirut and Damascus and southern Syria. For the most part they buttress a traffic flow which would in any event tend via Latakia as the natural port for northern Syria. At present cargo must still be lightered but, considering this circumstance, cargo handling is fairly rapid. The port company appears to be well managed and in recent years has earned, on its paid-in capital, a modest profit which rose to over 5% in 1953. With the completion of the port, it should prove possible to reduce handling costs substantially.

IV CIVIL AVIATION

Supplementing rail and road transport, there is a domestic air service linking Damascus with Aleppo, Kamichliye and Latakia. It is operated with a DC-3 by the Syrian Airways, an autonomous government enterprise dependent on the Ministry of Finance. The financial results of this operation have not been divulged publicly, but it is evidently not self-supporting. The government regards it primarily as a promotional venture and the tariffs are correspondingly low. It must be recognized that occasional rapid air communication between the principal cities is desirable, and the mission accordingly anticipates that a new twin-motor plane, costing perhaps £S 600,000 may soon be needed to maintain this service.

Damascus is the country's principal airport and is served by a number of international airlines. Considerable amounts have been spent on the improvement and equipment of this airport which has been given a Class B designation by the ICAO. Of the £S 1.075 million provided in the 1954 budget for airport construction, equipment and maintenance, over 70% was destined for Damascus. In view of the many more urgent tasks confronting the government, we see no justification for the proposal to construct an entirely new airport for Damascus. By continuing about the same level of expenditures in the future as in recent years, the government should be able to make the requisite improvements in existing airports, which include, besides Damascus, a Class C airport at Aleppo, a Class G airfield at Kamichliye and an airport as yet unclassified at Deir ez Zor.

14:International Bank S-5 (1954) 1955 MD1 Syria MD1

means of promotion. Indeed, in the first example given it was necessary to exempt certain materials for southern public works, sugar for the Homs refinery (by special license) and various other large imports, so that much of the remaining cargo affected by the decree would have entered through Latakia in any event. It is questionable whether the actual benefit to Latakia is enough to offset the domestic and international resentment engendered.

Favorable adjustment of the various port charges, such as those for anchorage, mooring, cargo handling and storage, offers a more satisfactory means of promotion. In these the Syrian government has already shown a flexible policy, readjusting the rate schedule from time to time; we feel that this policy should be continued. Inducements of this kind, together with constantly improving service to shippers, will in general meet the competition of other ports with greater benefit to the Syrian economy than negative or restrictive measures.

IV CIVIL AVIATION

In a period of a few years Syria has made appreciable progress in the development of her civil aviation. Wisely, at this early stage, she has concentrated on the most-needed domestic services and the educational steps to popularize air transport, while at the same time providing suitable airport facilities to insure good connection with international lines. Domestic air mail service was inaugurated in April 1954.

International Services

By the end of 1953 nine international airlines provided Syria with direct service to all parts of the world. These call primarily at Damascus, although the Class C airport at Aleppo is used internationally to some extent.

The Damascus airport is situated only 10 kilometers southwest of the center of the city on an excellent road, at an altitude of 715 meters. It has a main runway of 2,550 meters and a cross-wind runway of 1,000 meters, both paved. Runways, taxiways and aprons will take aircraft of up to 50 tons. Equipment includes full lighting to ICAO specifications,

14:International Bank S-5 (1954)1955 MD1 Syria MD1

a high-power non-directional radio beacon, VHF direction finder for bad weather, and its own 150 KW diesel power generating plant. Radio communication is maintained with Aleppo, Amsterdam, Athens, Baghdad, Basra, Beirut, Cairo, Istanbul, Djeddah, Jerusalem, Karachi, Nicosia, Paris, Rome and Teheran. 508

Both in the interest of international service and for the development of qualified domestic personnel the Syrian government has made good use of international technical assistance. Since 1953 it has had a team of ICAO experts in the country to train Syrian staff for the various ground services. In addition the government has sent a number of young Syrians overseas on fellowships to study aeronautical engineering, radio, air navigation, meteorology and aviation legislation.

Syrian Airways

Syrian Airways operates DC-3 flights between Damascus, Aleppo, Latakia, Kamichliye, Deir ez Zor and Palmyra, as well as Beirut. 509

At present no attempt is made to operate on an economic basis. Passenger rates range between £S 0.07 and £S 0.18 per kilometer. Freight is carried for as little as £S 0.67 per ton-kilometer on certain routes (against an estimated average cost of at least £S 1.60 and probably much more). Deficits are met by the government, while revenue may be used by the line for development purposes. The objective at this time is mainly to promote air transport by all available means. Landing fees are kept low, the tax on aviation gasoline is only 18 piasters per 100 liters, and Syria imposes no income tax on airline operations.

As accounts are now kept the actual expenditures for civil aviation, and for Syrian Airways in particular, are not easily separated from the national defense budget. The mission feels that the time has come to set up an independent accounting system for Syrian Airways, to enable the government to measure its progress against costs from year to year. Only in this way can the domestic line develop eventually into an economically sound business. Undoubtedly government financial support will be needed for some time, but the government must be in a position to evaluate its effectiveness.

For extensions and replacements it is very likely that more DC-3 airplanes can be acquired at favorable prices. Although this type is no longer

14:International Bank S-5 (1954) 1955 MD1 Syria MD1

509 built, many still in service are being retired by larger airlines whose increased traffic requires greater unit capacity. The mission recommends allocating possibly £S 600,000 to be used for this purpose over the next five years.

365 MUNICIPAL TRANSPORT

Both Aleppo and Damascus are served by city tram and bus systems. As in many other parts of the world, the buses are gradually replacing the tramways.

Aleppo

The tramway system of Aleppo was established in 1929 by a French company under a monopoly concession to provide the city with public transport. In 1951 the company was nationalized, continuing operations under the same concession. There was no bus service until 1952, when it was launched by the tramway company itself under a broadened interpretation of the original monopoly.

Both forms of transport are now operated at a small profit. While tramway development is static, new buses are being financed out of reserves set aside earlier for renewals on the tramway system. A gradual replacement will undoubtedly take place until the tramway system finally becomes uneconomical, but no immediate need to accelerate the process or to alter the policy is evident.

Damascus

Although older (1907) the Damascus tramway system has a similar history. Started by a Belgian company, it too was nationalized in 1951. In this case, however, the growth of bus competition has taken a different course.

In 1946 the tramways introduced three buses which they operated experimentally for about eight months. The fare was set at 15 piasters, but private buses made their appearance also, with a 10-piaster fare, and their competition caused the tramways' experiment to show an operating

حركة الطيران المدني في ميناء دمشق الجوي

CIVIL AVIATION TRAFFIC AT DAMASCUS AIRPORT

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Table No. 12 جدول رقم ١٢

Year and month	No. of aeroplanes عدد الطائرات		No. of Passengers عدد الركاب			السنة والشهور
	Arrivals الهابطة	Departures القلعة	Departures المسافرين	Arrivals القادمين	Transit المسافرين ترانزيت	
1952						١٩٥٢
January	172	171	606	534	1,505	كانون ثاني
February	154	153	490	606	1,483	شباط
March	175	177	599	645	1,568	آذار
April	197	195	864	853	1,944	نيسان
May	190	193	769	903	3,135	ايار
June	174	172	624	884	2,260	حزيران
July	212	213	1,090	1,090	2,779	تموز
August	295	294	5,361	719	2,388	آب
September	326	326	818	6,912	2,763	ايلول
October	343	346	1,038	1,441	3,091	تشرين اول
November	206	205	894	781	2,145	تشرين ثاني
December	192	192	932	776	2,374	كانون اول
Total	2,536	2,537	14,085	16,174	27,450	المجموع
1953						١٩٥٣
January	173	173	518	410	1,918	كانون ثاني
February	161	160	542	511	1,924	شباط
March	188	191	726	694	2,214	آذار
April	209	206	809	937	2,592	نيسان
May	213	211	800	1,002	2,978	ايار
June	172	171	752	896	2,609	حزيران
July	204	205	1,110	1,031	2,815	تموز
August	215	214	1,481	1,043	2,421	آب
September	234	234	1,135	2,350	2,822	ايلول
October	184	184	1,094	977	2,525	تشرين اول
November	180	179	921	850	1,778	تشرين ثاني
December	167	168	787	744	1,648	كانون اول
Total	2,300	2,296	10,675	12,035	28,244	المجموع

حركة الطيران المدني في مطار النيرب — حلب

CIVIL AVIATION TRAFFIC AT NAIRAB AIRPORT, ALEPPO

Table No. 13

جدول رقم ١٣

Year and month	No. of aeroplanes		No. of Passengers			السنة والشهور
	عدد الطائرات		عدد الركاب			
	الواصلة Arrivals	القائمة Departures	المسافرين Departures	القادمين Arrivals	مسافرين ترانزيت Transit	
1952						١٩٥٢
January	36	36	308	333	79	كانون ثاني
February	32	32	342	291	67	شباط
March	39	39	410	357	88	آذار
April	40	40	397	496	88	نيسان
May	39	39	453	470	91	أيار
June	32	32	376	362	155	حزيران
July	35	35	500	512	134	تموز
August	21	21	212	179	66	آب
September	20	20	236	213	—	أيلول
October	34	34	434	463	141	تشرين اول
November	33	33	336	348	105	تشرين ثاني
December	22	22	252	255	58	كانون اول
Total	383	383	4,436	4,306	1,077	المجموع
1953						١٩٥٣
January	29	29	106	80	16	كانون ثاني
February	26	26	155	146	16	شباط
March	19	19	135	146	21	آذار
April	29	29	234	314	43	نيسان
May	22	22	288	310	76	أيار
June	30	30	271	330	35	حزيران
July	36	36	381	406	63	تموز
August	21	21	223	191	—	آب
September	35	35	287	299	49	أيلول
October	44	44	360	325	82	تشرين اول
November	45	45	344	318	64	تشرين ثاني
December	41	41	287	293	51	كانون اول
Total	387	387	3,173	3,160	507	المجموع

3:Royal Institute of International Affairs U-4 (no date)1954 M1 Middle East
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into Jordan. There is a branch line from Deraa to Suwaida, but another branch, to Haifa, is out of use.

Damas-Hama et Prolongements. (*a*) From Beirut to Damascus there is a narrow-gauge track running for 91 miles via Rayaq; rack and pinion are used to traverse the mountains, and this slow haul is now employed for freight only. (*b*) From Rayaq to Aleppo there is a 4 ft 8 in. gauge track for 270 miles which passes through Homs and Hama. (*c*) The stretch of the Cairo–Turkey line from Ras an-Naqura on the Lebano–Israel border to Beirut is out of commission but the section of 64 miles in standard gauge from Beirut to Tripoli and Homs is used.

Syrian state Railways. This is the part (164 miles) of the Turkey–Mosul line that runs inside Syrian territory.

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Roads

Main arterial roads in Lebanon are considered adequate, but the network of secondary and feeder roads is poor. In Syria the road system is generally inadequate, and only the asphalted roads are usable for heavy traffic throughout the year. The following figures give some indication of the position:

Syria, 1951	Miles	Lebanon, 1949	Miles
1st class, asphalted	2,917	Surfaced	1,811
2nd class, macadamized	1,268	Unimproved	414
Tracks	5,218		

(Sources: *Statesman's Year-Book, 1953*; US Dept. of Commerce.)

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There are over 11,000 vehicles registered in Syria. Trans-desert passenger and goods services to Iraq are in regular use and goods are also moved, including refrigerated vegetables, to Kuwait and Dahran. The authorities are restricting the registration of new lorries to the estimated needs of the countries, but more vehicles are required, particularly diesel lorries for long hauls of heavy loads.

S L 509

Aerodromes. The new airport of Beirut (Khaldeh) receives the Comet, and is beginning to rival Cairo as a gateway to the East, and that of Damascus (Mezzeh) has long been in use by Constellations. Many international airlines stage at Khaldeh or Mezzeh; the approach to Khaldeh is better and, with between twenty and thirty aircraft a day, it has since 1951 outstripped Mezzeh, which has five to ten aircraft a day. For some years plans have been under consideration for moving the Damascus airport to the east of the city. There are two private Lebanese airlines. A national airline in Syria was a financial failure and was taken over by the army. Smaller airfields exist near Tripoli,

3:Royal Institute of International Affairs U-4 (no date)1954 M1 Middle East
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near Aleppo, and at Rayaq and there are many emergency landing fields.

Sea Ports. Since 1950 Beirut has handled over 2 million tonnage of ships a year; an increase of about a quarter of a million over the pre-war figures. The port has a free zone through which goods are shipped to Syria, Iraq, and Jordan. But the Syrian Government hopes to divert some of the transit trade from Beirut and has, with the assistance of a loan of $6 million from Saudi Arabia, formed a company to develop Latakia in order to handle about a million tons of goods a year (in 1952 431,593 tons were handled). Work on the extension of the port was begun by a Yugoslav firm in April 1953. Tripoli, Sidon, and Banias are ports handling the oil from the pipelines[1] and are little used for other purposes.

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Wireless and Telephones. An automatic telephone exchange system covers most of Syria and an automatic exchange is planned for Beirut. Telephone links with Europe and America are available through Beirut and normal cable facilities exist. The Syrian state broadcasting authority has two large transmitters and broadcasts in Arabic, French, English, and Hebrew. Near Beirut there is a station which broadcasts in Arabic, French, and English.

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The 'Common Interests'

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Under the Mandate, Syria and Lebanon formed an economic and customs union, the Higher Council of Common Interests, under the direct control of France, which administered customs and excise and controlled concessionary companies, antiquities, and some other services. On 1 January 1944 the control was transferred to the Syrian and Lebanese Governments. The currencies were linked and interchangeable, and both the Syrian and Lebanese pounds were largely backed by French francs based on a rate of 8·83 to the pound sterling (then worth $4·03). In order to maintain a good profit on the exchange brought in by oil companies the Lebanese and Syrian pounds were not devalued in 1949 to follow sterling. Exchange was controlled by one department for both countries and the note issue is in the hands of the French Banque de Syrie et du Liban.

But these links were incompatible with the differences that developed in the economic policies of the two countries when they became independent. Syria, in normal years, has a large exportable surplus of agricultural products and little transit trade, whereas the debtor trade balance of Lebanon is com-

[1] See Appendix IV, p. 570 below.

63:Simmons et al G-5 (1941-1951) 1954
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bul to Baghdad. A railroad also runs from Beirut to Damascus via Rayak. A second line from Damascus to Amman and Ma'an, in Jordan, forms part of the so-called "pilgrim" railway, opened in 1904-06. Air services are available from Damascus and, to a lesser extent, from Aleppo to Beirut and Baghdad, thence to Europe, Africa and the Far East.

Food and Nutrition

The nutritional standards of the people vary markedly in different regions, being highest in the vicinity of Damascus and lowest among the Alawites of Latakia province and the peasants of Hauran and Jebel ed Druz. Undernutrition is common, but generally it is more widespread in the rural villages than in the urban areas. Due to the lack of adequate storage and transportation facilities, local food shortages are frequent, particularly during poor crop years. Up to the present, there has been little organized effort to promote better nutrition among the different population groups. It is expected that such a program will be initiated by the nutrition division created within the governmental health services in 1952.

Cereals constitute the staple foods, and, with certain root vegetables, contribute 70 to 80 per cent of the caloric content of the average diet. Breads prepared from wheat flour are consumed in all parts of the country. Barley is sometimes employed, while maize and sorghum millet are used in the southeast. Rice is universally popular: it is grown in the Al Jazira region, and large amounts are also imported. Broad beans, chick-peas and lentils are basic food items in most areas. Other vegetables, including onions, potatoes, beets, tomatoes, eggplant and the leafy spinach and French lettuce, are abundant in Damascus and Al Jazira provinces, but scarce in Hauran and Jebel ed Druz. Numerous fruits are consumed in season, but the supply is scanty in the Euphrates valley and in the southern provinces. Olives and olive oil are important among most population groups. Milk is

p. 141 (A)